

## APPENDIX "F"

DROP-IN CENTRES  
THEIR EFFECT ON DISADVANTAGED  
YOUTH

Presented to: The Special Senate Committee on Poverty

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SENATE COMMISSION ON POVERTY  
THE CONCEPT OF DROP-IN CENTRES

To properly discuss the concept of DROP-IN CENTRES in a community, to understand their function and utility, we must pose certain questions pertaining to the problem. They are as follows:

1. What are DROP-IN CENTRES?
2. Why are DROP-IN CENTRES necessary? Where should they be located?
3. Are DROP-IN CENTRES fulfilling their purpose?
4. How can deficiencies in their utility be corrected?

The first question is relatively simplistic.

DROP-IN CENTRES are, at present, a place where disadvantaged youth can gather in the evenings, to mix with others of their own age and background. The centres provide entertainment in the form of coffee houses, dances, and in-door recreation.

These centres are staffed by young people under the direction of a supervisor. The difficulties encountered by the staff in relation to the functioning of the centre will be discussed in another section of this document. However, it would be proper at this time to point out that staff and administration difficulties are numerous.

The second question is perhaps the most difficult to answer and will, therefore, fill the bulk of this document.

Disadvantaged youth are economically separated from other youth of their age, and do not have access to the same outlets of recreation and enjoyment as youth of higher income families. The situation can be traumatized if the disadvantaged youth has acquaintances in higher income levels, because in a stratified class structured society

such as Canada, the physical deficiencies of the poor, such as money, can be exceeded by the psychological problems these deficiencies bring about. A culture of poverty evolves, trapping all who live in that environment. Young people become discouraged, and this discouragement can turn into frustration and hostility. A culturally, socially and economically depleted environment may force the disadvantaged youth to such outlets of aggression which will make subconscious feelings of resentment surface or, to fill a void in his/her life. We term these acts as a result of anti-social behaviour patterns, however in as much as a middle class life style dictates conformity, conformity becomes impossible when the elements of conformity are non-existent to the disadvantaged.

DROP-IN CENTRES can find their purpose within the situation we have described. Frequently, these centres are described by the average middle class person as "good place to keep these hellions off the streets." Indeed, DROP-IN CENTRES can perform this function—if we accept the belief that disadvantaged youth must conform to the stereotyped vision of a well-balanced, affluent young person. However, we have shown that the forces at work to create a "hell-raising" youngster are much more complex than the average citizen realizes—if this is the only purpose behind the creation of DROP-IN CENTRES then they have failed, for there is no substance to them.

Disadvantaged youth need to communicate their fears, problems and thoughts with someone who understand their needs. DROP-IN CENTRES can provide the contact potential, but it must be maximized. In other words, the DROP-IN CENTRES must be person-oriented; rather than facility-oriented. To merely provide facilities would be analogous to building a log cabin without a fireplace, for warmth and friendship must pervade the atmosphere.

Within the last ten years, the phenomenon of a definitive youth culture has increased to problems of disadvantaged youth. Largely commercialistics, young people have been manipulated by consumer-oriented business interests and a facade of values has been constructed. Encouraging the young to buy cars, clothing and other fashionable items as proof of their "coolness" and "hipness" has